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ABSTRACT

This study was conducted to determine the effectiveness of the Academic Appeal Program (AAP) in improving the retention of at-risk students at John A. Logan College (JALC) in Illinois. The AAP allows students whose poor academic performance results in ineligibility for financial aid to continue their schooling under a strict performance contract. A survey was administered to 317 students, 46 of whom responded, who were enrolled in the appeal program during fall 1996, spring 1997, and fall 1997. Supporting student academic data were obtained from the Office of Financial Aid and the Office of Admissions. Variables demonstrating the program's effectiveness were identified as an improved grade point average (GPA), continued enrollment at JALC, and reinstatement of eligibility for financial aid. Results indicated that, over the course of three semesters, the average student's GPA started very low, increased while in the AAP, and then declined slightly the semester after the program. However, mean GPA was still significantly higher the semester after the student was released from the program then before he or she enrolled in it. Results show that 57% of fall 1996 AAP participants, 46% of spring 1997 participants, and 80% of fall 1997 participants returned the semester after enrollment in the program. The overall percentage of AAP students that were approved for financial eligibility was 48.6%. Appended are the human subjects approval, request for study at JACL, cover letter and survey instrument, the AAP student contract, student monitoring report, and miscellaneous letters. Contains 25 references. (EMH)

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The Effectiveness of the Academic Appeal Program at John A. Logan Community College

by

Kathleen A. Gallagher

B.A., Southern Illinois University at Carbondale, 1996

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A Thesis
Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
the Master of Science in Education Degree

Department of Educational Administration and Higher Education
in the Graduate School
Southern Illinois University
at Carbondale
March 1998

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An Abstract of

The Effectiveness of the Academic Appeal Program at John A. Logan Community College

by

Dr. Larry Chapman, Ph.D.
Dean for Student Services
John A. Logan College

Kathleen A. Gallagher, M.S.
Southern Illinois University, Carbondale, 1998

Purpose of the Study:

This study was conducted to determine the effectiveness of the Academic Appeal Program (AAP) at John A. Logan College (JALC) in improving the retention rate of at-risk students. The problem was to demonstrate the effectiveness of the AAP from the students' perceptions of the program, GPA, and student retention rate. The hypothesis is that the AAP is highly effective and provides additional support and resources for students ineligible for financial aid at JALC.

The AAP was tested, based on a series of questions and responses from students in the program and comparison of the grade point averages of students prior to, during, and after enrollment in the AAP. The results focus on the retention rate for at-risk students.

Poor academic records result in students being ineligible to receive any financial aid, thus negatively affecting their ability to continue their education. The AAP is offered to financial aid recipients who loose their eligibility due to lack of success in academic performance. In response to this problem the Department of Student Services at JALC has designed the AAP, an innovative program to offer students the opportunity to continue their education for a limited time period under the terms of a strict performance contract.

Each semester that financial assistance is awarded, recipients must demonstrate academic progress. Students that do not achieve academic progress are given the opportunity to participate in the Academic Appeal Program as an avenue to have their financial assistance eligibility reinstated.

For this reason, *one incentive for students who are ineligible for financial aid is the opportunity to enroll in courses and defer their tuition payments by signing a contract with their academic advisor.*

Findings:

This study included 46 survey responses from a sample of 317 students enrolled during the Fall 1996, Spring 1997, and Fall 1997 in the AAP. Student academic data for this study were obtained from the Office of Financial Aid and Office of Admissions. The variables consisted of GPA, enrollment in JALC, and participant/non-participant status within the AAP.

The results indicated that over the course of three semesters (prior to, during and after) enrollment in the AAP, the average student's GPA started very low, increased while in the AAP and declined slightly the semester after the AAP. Based on the results, a statistically significant difference occurred between the GPAs of the students the semester prior to enrollment in the AAP and the semester during enrollment in the AAP. The results displayed the mean GPA was significantly higher the semester after the student was released from the program as compared to the semester before enrollment in the AAP.

The retention rate has increased and the results show that 57% of the students in Fall 1996 did return the semester after enrollment in the AAP. In Spring 1997, 46% of the AAP participants returned the next semester. In Fall 1997, the retention rate dramatically increased to 80%. The researcher also discovered that

approximately half of the students in the AAP passed the program. It was also found that 69.6% of the participants in this study indicated they had been enrolled in the AAP for only one semester. In Fall 1996, there was no statistically significant difference in the GPA amongst students in the AAP versus students not enrolled in the AAP. Consequently, there was a statistically significant difference between students not in the AAP versus those in the AAP during the Spring 1997, and Fall 1997 semesters.

The GPA's of students in the AAP for Spring 1997, and Fall 1997 were significantly higher than students ineligible for financial aid and not enrolled in the program. The student's perceptions of the AAP informed the researcher the program was effective, but there are improvements in essay form recommended by the student participants in the study. The students also believe that the AAP effected their personal, academic and/or financial objectives.

1) The overall percentage of students from Fall 1996, Spring 1997, and Fall 1998 enrolled in the AAP that were approved for financial eligibility is 48.58%.
2) Based on the sample population of 46, the average person was enrolled in the AAP for 1.59 semesters.
3) There was a difference in GPA between students in the AAP versus ineligible students for financial aid not enrolled in the AAP.
4) The retention rate of AAP participants and non-AAP participants has improved recently (1997-1998), as compared to 1996-1997.
5) The students in the AAP strongly believe the program is effective.
6) Even though the retention rate of students in the AAP decreased rapidly after they were released from the program (over 40% for Fall 1996 and Spring 1997), there was a significant increase in enrollment (Spring 1998) after students were released from the program in Fall 1997. The retention rate for Fall 1997 AAP participants was 80%. This figure may indicate that the effectiveness of the AAP is increasing.

All AAP participants from Fall 1996, Spring 1997, and Fall 1997 showed statistically significant differences in GPA between the semester prior to enrollment in the AAP as compared to the semester enrolled in the AAP. Only one statistically significant difference existed between the GPA of the AAP participants and that was the semester prior to enrollment in the AAP as compared to the semester after the student was released from the AAP.

References:

Wyman, F. J. (1996). A predictive model of retention rate at regional two-year colleges. Community College Review, 25 (1), 29-45.

SIU

Thesis Approval

The Graduate School
Southern Illinois University

March 3, 1998

I hereby recommend that the thesis prepared under my supervision by

Kathleen A. Gallagher

Entitled

The Effectiveness of the Academic Appeal Program at John A. Logan Community College

be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Science in Education

James M. Wallace
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Committee for the Final Examination

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ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS OF

Kathleen A. Gallagher, for the Master of Science in Education degree in Higher Education, presented on March 3, 1998, at Southern Illinois University at Carbondale.

TITLE: The Effectiveness of the Academic Appeal Program at John A. Logan Community College

MAJOR PROFESSOR: James A. Wallace, Ph.D.

The purpose of this study was to determine the effectiveness of the Academic Appeal Program (AAP) based on: a series of questions and responses from students in the program, a comparison of the differences and similarities of students ineligible for financial aid, how the AAP benefits both the institution and the student; and the retention rate for at-risk students and their grade point averages.

This thesis focused on the effects of the AAP at John A. Logan Community College (JALC) measuring academic success and retention of students who were ineligible to receive federal financial aid due to their poor academic performance. The problem was to determine the success of the AAP through student responses, comparing the grade point averages of the students before and during their enrollment in the AAP, and the semester after enrollment in the AAP. The hypothesis was that those students who were enrolled in the AAP would be more successful academically. Data for the study were obtained from institutional records and through a survey instrument. The survey consisted of a Likert scale measurement of three areas relating to students' experience in the AAP: personal, academic, and

financial.

The findings of this study indicate that the overall academic performance of the AAP participants increased while enrolled in the program and decreased after being released from the program. Combined together, nearly half of the students in the AAP had their financial aid eligibility reinstated from the three semesters analyzed: Fall 1996, Spring 1997, and Fall 1997. The majority of the students on the AAP are enrolled for only one semester. Thus, 63.1% of AAP enrollees returned for the subsequent semester after release from the AAP contract and the AAP was therefore deemed successful in increasing the retention rate of AAP participants. Student participants believed that the program was effective in that the AAP had a positive impact on their personal, academic and financial objectives.

The results from this study may be utilized to develop programs that will improve student retention, enrollment, and academic success in other higher education institutions.

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Dr. Wallace, I have learned a lot from you and hope to take it all and turn it into something beautiful by giving back to others. Your insight, knowledge and faith in my potential has enabled me to persevere through this program.

To my parents, for your unconditional love, support, patience and understanding as I have worked through my education, giving me the space to grow and develop, and being there when I needed you.

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Chapter I

Introduction

Higher education institutions are facing several challenges today. One of the most important issues in higher education is developing strategies for increasing student retention (Brawer, 1996, p. 3 & McMillan, 1995, p.18). This specific issue was addressed by the administration through the Department of Student Services at John A. Logan College.

Statement of the Problem

This study attempts to determine the effectiveness of the Academic Appeal Program (AAP) at John A. Logan College (JALC) in improving the retention rate of students. The problem was to demonstrate the effectiveness of the AAP from students' perceptions of the program, examine GPAs, and analyze the student retention rate. The hypothesis was that the AAP is highly effective and provides additional support and resources for students ineligible for financial aid at JALC.

Due to JALC policies, poor academic records result in students being ineligible to receive any financial aid, thus negatively affecting their ability to continue their education. The AAP is offered to financial aid recipients who loose their eligibility due to lack of success in academic performance. In response to this problem the Department of Student Services at JALC designed the AAP, an innovative program to offer students the opportunity to continue their education for a limited time period under the terms of a strict performance contract.

Each semester that financial assistance is awarded, recipients must demonstrate academic progress. Students that do not achieve academic

progress are given the opportunity to participate in the Academic Appeal Program as an avenue to have their financial assistance eligibility reinstated.

The incentive for participation in the AAP is the opportunity to enroll in courses and defer tuition payments by signing a contract with an academic advisor. This contract states that the student will do the following:

- meet with his/her academic advisor once every two weeks for the entire sixteen week semester,
- gain signatures every two weeks from each of the student's instructors who will state the student's current average in the course,
- attend class regularly,
- seek tutoring if there are difficulties with academic progress,
- and see a counselor if necessary (JALC Memo, September 29, 1993).

The signing of this contract (Appendix E) serves as an understanding between the student and the advisor of the expectations in both parties. If the student is actively involved in the AAP Program the entire sixteen weeks of the academic semester, and has proven to be academically successful (receiving at least a "C" average or 3.0 on a 5.0 scale in each of their courses), financial aid will be processed retroactively for the student. This allows students the opportunity to redeem themselves academically by taking classes, and not worrying about the costs of tuition and fees until the semester is nearly over. However, students must pay for their own books and materials that are needed for class at the beginning of the semester.

A Student Monitoring Report (Appendix F) was designed by the Financial Aid Office and academic advisors to provide them with information needed to monitor the student's academic progress and class attendance. This report is given to the student by the academic advisor at the

beginning of the semester when the student enrolls in the AAP. The student is asked to complete this report and return it to the academic advisor. The Student Monitoring Report is kept on file in the advisor's office.

Research Questions

The following research questions were addressed in this study:

1. What percentage of the students enrolled in the AAP were approved for financial aid eligibility in Fall 1996, Spring 1997, and Fall 1997?
2. How many semesters does the average student ineligible for financial aid enroll in the AAP?
3. Has the Grade Point Average changed for those students enrolled in the AAP versus those students who are not enrolled in the AAP?
4. Has the retention rate of students in the AAP improved in comparison to the retention rate of students not in the AAP?
5. How do the students in the AAP feel about their experience, in general, and how might their experiences be improved?
6. How did the AAP affect students' grade point average during and immediately after enrollment in the AAP?
7. Did students enrolled in the AAP from Fall 1996, Spring 1997, and Fall 1997 believe the program affected their personal, academic and/or financial objectives?

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to determine the effectiveness of the AAP, based on a series of questions and responses from students in the program and comparison of the grade point averages of students prior to,

during, and after enrollment in the AAP. The results focus on the retention rate for at-risk students.

Significance of the Study

There is a consistent need for financial assistance and academic support for students in higher education. There are many resources to help and encourage students, and the AAP is a paramount program focused on increasing student retention and academic success. Students in the AAP are given the opportunity to pursue their academic endeavors and still receive financial assistance. Institutions using the results of this study may foster student success by identifying financial and academic needs than adjusting financial aid services to help improve academic performance and meet educational goals. Thus, this study is important because it seeks to examine the effectiveness of a program which combines academic and financial assistance on retention and scholastic performance.

"According to the U. S. National Center for Educational Statistics, thirty-three percent of American college students are enrolled at community colleges" (Pascarella, 1997, p. 15). In the State of Illinois, sixty-six percent of college students are enrolled in community colleges (Illinois Community College Board, 1997, p. 1). For this reason, there is a need for more documented research and study on students in the community college setting. This study is also quite significant in the fact that there is little documentation of the AAP and its effectiveness in the community college setting. Documentation of this program offers research data which can be utilized by any higher education institution.

Scope and Delimitations

The sample for this study was drawn from a population of 1124 students ineligible for financial aid due to their academic record during the 1996-1997 and 1997-1998 school terms. John A. Logan College enrolls over 5,000 students each semester.

This study was delimited to only those students who were enrolled voluntarily under the terms specified by the AAP contractual agreement. This study was further delimited to those students who sought financial assistance. Students whose academic performance placed them at-risk of failing to make progress toward their degree, yet elected to pay their own expenses to remain enrolled, were not included as a part of this study.

Limitations

One limitation of this study was that as a result of inconsistent and faulty record keeping, only the data retrieved by the researcher through discussions with each advisor and FAO which appears to be consistent and accurate were utilized in this study. Thus, interpretation and independent judgment by the researcher will play a significant role in the analysis and presentation of the data.

Second, the sample for this study was drawn from the number of students at JALC (1124) ineligible for financial aid due to their academic record in 1996-1997 and 1997-1998.

Third, the study utilized survey instruments for which reliability and validity were not determined. This was due to severe time constraints. However, the survey instrument was approved by a panel of experts which consisted of two AAP participants, and a several academic advisors.

Two major characteristics of this study are retention and academic success. Characteristics of the AAP participants include: gender, age, and race. This study is based on the assumption the student services staff at JALC upholds their positions and are student oriented, and act in the best interest and needs of the students. These factors could make a significant impact on the retention rate and the academic success of a student at JALC.

Much of the existing data since the establishment of the AAP (Fall 1993) to the present, has not been faithfully recorded. In addition, much of the data that was recorded was lost due to damaged storage disks. The remaining files are unmarked, containing many handwritten names and student identification numbers.

Currently, all of the records are handwritten (some illegible), not computer generated and not clearly marked or dated. Consequently, most of the existing data have not been of much utility in this study. Data for this study are limited to the Fall 1996, Spring 1997, and Fall 1997 semesters.

Implementation of the AAP at JALC is somewhat inconsistent. Each academic adviser uses his/her own discretion when deciding the number of times to meet with the AAP students. Some advisors make it mandatory for students to meet with them at least two times a semester, while other academic advisors require meeting with the students at least five times per semester if the student is to be approved for completion of the AAP.

Definition of Terms

For the purpose of this study, the following definition of terms will apply:

1. Academic Appeal Program (AAP) - a student retention effort designed by John A. Logan College that assists students to be successful

in their academic performance so they can be eligible for financial aid.

2. AAP participant - Students who enter into agreement with the college to enroll in a student assistance program in order to experience academic success and have their financial aid reinstated.
3. Non-AAP participant - a student enrolled for academic credit who is ineligible for financial assistance.
4. John A. Logan College (JALC) - an open admission, public community college located in Carterville, Illinois that offers inexpensive, high-quality educational programs to citizens.
5. Financial Assistance Office (FAO) - a department on campus which provides services to students who need monetary support. Financial assistance at JALC is available in the form of grants, loans, scholarships and part-time employment with the college.
6. Admissions Office - the department on campus that determines admissions, approves graduation clearances, maintains transcripts, works closely with academic advisors and provides course registration services to students.
7. Retention - term which describes student persistence rates for any given time period. Retention occurs when a student continuously enrolls in an institution due to individual and/or institutional efforts. Retention in this study was measured by whether the student completed the semester when enrolled on the AAP and returned for the following semester after completion of the AAP.
8. Academic success - determined by the institution to indicate successful achievement in academic courses offered by the institution, indicated by a grade of "C" or above.

9. Academic advisor - an individual who assists students in the selection and registration of courses at an institution.
10. Persistence - enrollment behavior characterized by re-enrollment for academic credit for the semester immediately following the completion of enrollment in the AAP.
11. Non-persistence - departure from the institution prior to the end of the academic semester or year and failure to return prior to the completion of all degree requirements.
12. Attrition - involuntary withdrawal from the school at any time prior to graduation.
13. At-risk student - factors or characteristics that will decrease the probability for a student to graduate or develop the skills, knowledge and attitudes necessary to function successfully in society.

Summary

This thesis is organized in five chapters. Chapter I offers an introduction to the AAP at JALC. In addition, relevant terms are defined, assumptions and delimitations of the study are presented. Chapter I also includes a brief discussion of the significance of the study for student affairs professionals and higher education administrators.

Chapter II consists of the review of literature as it pertains to student retention, financial aid, student assistance programs and JALC. Chapter III contains the design of the study, procedures for gathering the data and a description of the sample population. Chapter IV provides the results of this study. Finally, Chapter V contains the summary, conclusions, and recommendations for future research.

Chapter II

Review of Related Literature

This chapter discusses the following issues pertaining to the Academic Appeal Program (AAP) at John A. Logan College (JALC): 1) Student retention, 2) Student Assistance Programs, 3) Financial Aid, and 4) JALC. This study was conducted at JALC, located in Carterville, IL, an open admission, public community college that offers instructive educational courses to citizens, primarily in the local area in southern Illinois. JALC offers many services and opportunities to people affiliated with the institution and serves the following surrounding counties: Jackson, Williamson, Franklin, Perry, and Randolph (JALC 1995-1996 Bulletin, p. 2).

Student Retention

The Illinois Community College System was asked to report on initiatives being taken to improve student retention. Thirty colleges responded by describing their retention strategies. One of these programs, the AAP project at JALC was created to initiate a comprehensive student success and retention program. The major components of the project included: the development of an improved assessment system, training for faculty advisors and student services staff in developmental advising, development of a Freshman Orientation Seminar, development of an improved assessment system through computer-adaptive assessment, and development of career counseling services (Bell, 1983, p. 13-19).

The Financial Aid Office and Student Support Services have collaborated in an Academic Appeal Program. Student

who are ineligible to receive financial assistance may achieve reinstatement by successfully completing the Academic Appeal Program, which focuses on student accountability and responsibility as essential components of reinstatement.

Student retention is an important issue for higher education institutions. Significant numbers of students enrolled at two year community colleges drop out for various reasons, causing great concern for faculty and administrators. Bell (1983) investigated reasons why students discontinued going to college and identified several reasons cited most often by students to explain their attrition behavior (e. g., vocational direction, poor choice of school, meeting a loved one, general dissatisfaction with the school, etc.). Bell further stated that related literature indicates a true relationship between individuals and institutions that can cause individuals to withdraw from certain campuses. The subjects of Bell's study were selected from the population of graduating seniors in a high school enrolled at Richland College during the Fall semester of 1981-1982. A total of 2,264 students were divided into two groups based on enrollment at the college during the Spring of 1982. The social variables found to be most significant were: students' perceptions of school, satisfaction with the institution, progress toward educational goal, and the effect that employment had on school. The institutional variables found to be most significant were: student services, student satisfaction with the institution, hours completed at the school, and grade point average's the first semester. The study found that 57% of students dropped out of Richland College in the Spring of 1982. The reasons varied from transportation problems to conflicting hours, financial difficulties to moving to a different area, and from class course problems to personal

problems (Bell, 1983, p. 13-19).

There are various questions raised that ask why students are not succeeding in the classroom. One study shows that community colleges are defining "quality" by evaluating their publications to determine if there are patterns and consistencies of how "quality" is perceived, directly and indirectly. The authors sent 150 two-year colleges in the United States and Puerto Rico a letter asking for any publication written in the last five years that concerned the "quality" of education. Seventy-six colleges responded (just over 50%) by sending materials. Some varied from unpublished to published, and patterns were indicated after studying the materials extensively. It was found that:

1) student services were identified as a key variable.
2) many of the respondents mentioned counseling services.
3) few sent brochures regarding special services (i.e. translators or signers for students with hearing impairments).
4) placement rates and histories were used to measure "quality".
5) business community was monitored to meet the student's needs and for follow-ups.
6) faculty was mentioned by most institutions as a key variable.
7) material showed a concern more with teaching than research.
8) curriculum emerged in nearly all documents as a key to quality.
9) vocational education was addressed.
10) an important factor included transferability of credits.

"The research shows that two-year colleges view quality education as an outcome, not a process" (Smith, 1994, p. 40).

Students who are more identified with academics have a tendency to be more motivated to succeed because their self-esteem is directly affected by academic performance. Therefore, students who are not identified with academics have no incentive to excel at academic tasks. As a result, those students may be at a higher risk for academic problems, especially poor grades and dropping out (Osborne, 1996).

A study was done by Hyman in 1993 to determine how student outcomes assessment is used to improve programs and services at selected higher education institutions known for their well-developed assessment programs. Six out of ten schools asked participated in the study. The participating schools were: James Madison University, the University of Scranton, Northeast Missouri State University, Longwood College, St. Louis University, and Johnson County Community College in Kansas. The instrument used in the data collection was a fourteen question survey developed to gather information about assessment practices at each of the participating schools. Each item was composed of an open-ended question to encourage participants to give detailed information. Three questions were researched: 1) How would you describe the student outcomes assessment program at your institution?, 2) How is the information generated by student outcomes assessment used by the school?, and 3) How has the institution changed or improved by using student outcomes data? (Hyman, 1994, p. 20-30).

The participating schools indicated that external agencies (regional accrediting associations and state coordinating boards) have some contribution to current campus designs. Each school was at a different stage in developing an overall outcome assessment plan. Some institutions did not exhibit any improvements related to assessment. Two schools expressed that they have not evaluated what changes have taken place. Five significant factors that contributed to the success of the assessment and improvement of the institution were: 1) self-examination, 2) responsibility for the educational mission, 3) concern for quality, improvement, and student experience, 4) developmental continuum, and 5) follow-up and evaluation (Hyman,

1994, p. 20-30).

The retention rate in community colleges is considerably lower than other types of higher education institutions, partially due to the diversity of educational goals held by the community college students (Conkin, 1993). Beatty-Guenter (1994) discusses the importance of academic persistence. She acknowledges four common retention strategies by category type: sorting, supporting, connecting, and transforming. Sorting involves strategies that attempt to place students in college programs most suitable to their professional and academic goals, or placement in courses according to their academic ability, or enrollment in programs according to their at-risk student status. Sorting strategies address problems such as attrition and meeting students' needs regarding financial, family, health or housing accommodations. Connecting involves techniques that create a bond between the student and the institution. Some successful approaches to connect a student to its school are through student groups and activities, orientation, mentors, class attendance, work study employment, faculty advisors and special events. Tinto's (1975) research on social integration and Astin's (1985) research on student involvement are relevant within the context of the connecting strategy because student involvement in campus life has been found to be one of the top indicators of student retention in a number of research studies (Beatty-Guenter cited in Astin 1985, Tinto 1975). Finally, transforming is the strategy that tends to effect changes in students. These changes can occur through: tutoring, policy changes, career counseling, and curriculum change. Some students are in need of focused programs that help them overcome a history of academic failure and negative experiences in education (Beatty-Guenter, 1994, p. 113-115, 121).

Financial Aid

Many college students receive financial assistance. This assistance enables students to attend school and continue their education. Students who are awarded scholarships, grants or some form of aid are less likely to drop out of school than those who do not receive awards (Beatty-Guenter, 1994, p. 118). With financial assistance being an asset to numerous students, this brings many concerns on behalf of the institution, because students will not return to school if they are unable to meet the financial component of their higher education.

Community college students find the financial aid office a vital service center (McMillan, 1995, p. 8). Two major problems that make college unaffordable to students are the rising cost of college attendance and the inability of financial aid to keep pace with costs. Student financial aid has declined as college costs and tuition has risen over the years (Rifkin, 1995, p. 53-54).

There are four primary sources of student financial aid: the federal government, state governments, educational institutions, and private philanthropies. Federal aid is distributed in various methods, as a grant, a loan, or a work-study program. The most common form is the Pell Grant. The Pell grant is dispensed only to undergraduate students and is based on financial need. Few students receive the Federal Student Educational Opportunity Grant (FSEOG). FSEOG's are given to students who have demonstrated the most financial need (Rifkin, 1995, p. 55-56).

Another form of aid is loans. Loans need to be repaid by the student. Student loans allow interest to be deferred until they complete their educational program. There are three types of federal loans: Federal Direct

Student Loans, Federal Family Education Loans, and Federal Perkins Loans. These loans are all based on financial need (Rifkin, 1995, p. 56-57).

Students must maintain satisfactory academic progress to qualify and maintain eligibility for federal student aid. Generally, this means maintaining a "C" average or academic standing consistent with the institution's graduation requirements (Rifkin, 1995, p. 57, Cited in U. S. Department of Education, 1995). For community college students, qualifying for aid poses the largest single funding problem (Rifkin, 1995, p. 58).

It is difficult to determine a student's financial need. A formula was created to determine eligibility for receiving aid based on financial need. The formula calculates the cost of attendance at a specific institution and subtracts from this amount the expected family contribution. The result is a figure that represents the student's financial need (Rifkin, 1995, p. 59).

Some of the issues currently being addressed are: transfer students and financial aid eligibility, student loan recipients who are not first time borrowers, federal requirement of academic progress, student loan recipients who are not attending classes, and students receiving supplemental Pell grant but are not attending classes. These are some issues that higher education institutions are now facing since the Clinton Administration came to power. Schools with default rates of more than forty percent in one year face the loss of participation in all federal student-aid programs (Chronicle of Higher Education, Jan. 17, 1997). The loan default rate at JALC for 1993 was 25.4%. This number decreased in 1994 to 18.5% and rose again to 21.2% in 1995 (U. S. Department of Education, 1995). Data from the Fall 1995 semester show: 35% of all first time enrolled loan recipients failed to make academic progress, 18% of all first time enrolled loan recipients failed to complete a single hour, and

24% of all student loans at JALC during this semester were awarded to students enrolled for the first time (JALC Memo, February 27, 1996). In 1995, the Federal Loan Default Rate at JALC was 21.2% (U. S. Department of Education, 1997).

In an effort to protect Title IV programs, JALC created the AAP. This program has attempted to help students reinstate their eligibility for financial assistance. In Fall 1995, 736 loans were processed. Thirty percent of students (219) who received student loans did not make academic progress their first semester at JALC (JALC Memo, March 6, 1996). Since 1990, the national rate at which college students default on their loans has been cut in half (Chronicle of Higher Education, February 2, 1996).

Since 1992, the United States Department of Education has barred 672 educational institutions from all federal-aid programs, including the student-loan programs, and an additional 203 solely from the loan programs (Burd, Chronicle of Higher Education, Jan. 17, 1997). Since schools with loan default rates of more than twenty-five percent for three consecutive years face the loss of participation in the student-loan programs, it is up to each school to devise its own strategy to regulate and lower its students' federal loan default rate. Threat to lose federal aid has been the most effective tool used by the United States Department of Education to save taxpayers money and help reduce the deficit. The average default rate from a public two-year college in 1997 was 13.8 percent, which is down from 14.5 percent in 1993 (Burd, Chronicle of Higher Education, Jan. 17, 1997).

Several studies have been conducted to measure the academic performance of financial aid recipients (Taylor & Raffetto, 1983, p. 45, Cited in Davis, 1978; Williams, 1977; Bergen & Zielke, 1979, and McCreight & LeMay,

1982). A study was conducted at Temple Junior College, a two-year college, from 1973 through 1979. The grade point system was on a four point scale. The participants of the study were recipients of the Basic Educational Opportunity Grant (BEOG), otherwise known as the Pell Grant. Four measures of success were selected as variables: graduation, not on scholastic probation or suspension, GPA, and the total number of hours earned at the college. The study found there were no statistically significant differences in the graduation rate of students who receive the BEOG versus students who do not receive the BEOG. There was no statistically significant difference for students on scholastic probation or suspension. The BEOG recipients earned an average of 45.4 credit hours in one year, as compared to non-recipients receiving an average of 33.5 credit hours in one year. There were statistically significant differences found when comparing the GPA's of student receiving the BEOG versus the non-recipients (Taylor, J. L. & Raffetto, W., 1983, p. 44-51).

Student Assistance Programs

There is a demand for many community colleges to eliminate loans to students who have not established academic credibility. JALC, along with Rend Lake College, Shawnee College and Southeastern Illinois College, have attempted to change institutional policies to require students to complete twelve semester hours with a "C" average in each course taken as a condition for receiving approved loan eligibility. At JALC, the AAP was created to help decrease the loan default rate and increase academic success along with student retention. This program was designed to eliminate the possibility of students reaping the benefits of student financial assistance while not

performing as a student or achieving an established level of a "C" average in academic success (JALC Memo, February 27, 1996).

The Illinois Community College Board reported there are student retention strategies that each Illinois community college is attempting to implement. JALC is in the process of a five-year Title III grant-funded project. The objective of this project is to create a Comprehensive Student Success and Retention Program. Many innovative approaches have been taken to increase student success. The college provided various programs and services to new students, developed a Freshman Orientation Seminar, and revised the approach to academic advising by allowing all new students to be seen one-on-one by an academic advisor. Students are assigned a specific advisor, after the initial session, who will work with them on academic and financial matters. A few faculty, staff and administrators were selected and trained to take the responsibility of advising students. The advisors are responsible for entering student schedules into the computer system after they are agreed upon with the student. Fast-track advising is another service provided to select students. Finally, this grant-funded project allows an on-line degree audit capability. This service is designed and available to advisors with a quick response of only a few minutes (McMillan, 1995, p.18). Brawer discovered through her studies on retention and attrition that intervention strategies with the strongest impact on students are: orientation programs, mentoring, and multiple strategy approaches (Brawer, 1996, p. 4).

Students at-risk of becoming dropouts are those experiencing academic difficulty, and those placed on academic probation based upon achieved GPA. Kansas State University conducted a study on a program between the University Counseling Service and the dean's office in the College of

Architecture and Design. This program was designed to act as an intervention to students experiencing academic difficulty. The program evaluation data was collected at the beginning and at the end of the program. This program monitored academic indicators including GPA, dropout rates, graduation rates, and academic standing throughout the semester. The program is offered as a ten week seminar for students placed on academic probation. Based on the initial list of probation students, more than 25% did not return the following semester. Between 20% to 40% of students eligible for this program expressed interest in participation in the program. The students were placed in small groups of 8 to 14 people. Support seminars were facilitated by graduate students from the same college. One group found that the seminar method was significantly better than having contact with an individual advisor. There are six areas of emphasis at these seminars: Involvement, Personal Issues, Peer Influence, Problem Solving, Behavior Change and Skill Building. As a result, all participants of this study noted improvements in each area of emphasis. In comparison to the non-participants, the participants in this program got off probation at a 36% higher rate, maintained enrollment in the college at a 52% higher rate, withdrew from the university at a less than 51% rate, graduated at a 33% higher rate and changed majors at a less than 37% rate. Many student voluntarily stayed in the program after their probationary status was removed (Newton, 1990, p. 183-186).

Mohawk Community College, located in Ontario, Canada, enrolls 14,500 students. A concern for student retention was addressed as a voluntary group of faculty, support staff and administrators created a Student Success Program that consists of three areas. These areas include: institutional

research, intervention strategies, and evaluation. Each first-year student completed a demographic survey, created through institutional research, that was entered into the Retention Information System, an information system that holds demographic, withdrawal, performance and tracking data. This information was downloaded and could be accessed by faculty or staff. Intervention strategies involved: peer tutoring, academic and social orientation for both new and returning students, establishing student support groups, and creating an Office for Student Success to help initiate, promote, support and coordinate institutional research and student success strategies. Evaluation attempts to measure the value of the interventions produced results. The implementation of the Student Success Program has enabled Mohawk Community College to reduce its attrition rates by 15-20%. As a result of this program, all retention objectives were successfully achieved. Those objectives included: an increased awareness across the college of student success issues, continuing development of a rich and useful Retention Information System, and reduction of attrition in six program areas representing eighteen individual academic programs over three years (Grevatt, 1992, p. 2-9).

John A. Logan College

John A. Logan College, established in 1967, was named after John A. Logan, a Civil War General who spent his time in the community college district prior to becoming a U. S. senator and vice-presidential candidate in 1884. John Logan is noted for his pursuit for establishing Memorial Day and and having been an advocate for public education. The first classes were held in September 1968, enrolling 330 full-time and part-time students. The first

student body was comprised of all freshmen. This college sits on 161-acres on Highway 13, just west of Carterville, IL (JALC Bulletin 1995-1996, p. 2).

JALC is an open admission, public community college that offers instructive educational courses to citizens, primarily in the local area in southern Illinois. JALC offers many services and opportunities to people affiliated with the institution. The college is located in Carterville, IL and serves the following surrounding counties: Jackson, Williamson, Franklin, Perry, and Randolph (JALC 1995-1996 Bulletin, p. 2).

The AAP was established by Larry Peterson and Dollean York-Anderson in Fall 1993, to meet the expanding financial and academic support needs of John A. Logan College students. The Academic Appeal Program has been a cooperative effort between Student Support Services and Student Financial Assistance at JALC. There are fourteen academic advisors that work with students in the AAP. This innovative proposal was born from the idea that students in poor academic standing are in greater need of academic counseling. Acknowledging hardships posed by the denial of financial aid to at-risk students, the staffs of the Financial Aid Office and Student Support Services worked in tandem to guide these students through the academic appeal process and aid in the reinstatement of their financial assistance. The benefits of this process are two-fold: students receive the counseling they need to attain academic progress and Student Support Services meets its mission statement in offering the counseling, guidance and support students need (JALC Memo, September 23, 1993).

Chapter III

Methodology

This chapter contains the procedures used for conducting this study. Specifically, the chapter includes discussions of the 1) population; 2) research methodology; 3) AAP contract; 4) selection of the sample; 5) collection of data; and 6) procedures for analysis of the data.

Population

This study involved a population of 1124 at-risk students enrolled in the AAP at John A. Logan College, a two year public rural community college located in Carterville, IL with an enrollment of approximately 5,000 students. The survey contained a section requesting demographic data on: identification of gender, ethnicity, and age of the participants. The sample included 317 of the 1124 at-risk students enrolled for Fall 1996, Spring 1997, and Fall 1997 semesters. Although all 317 students were solicited for their involvement in this study, only 46 volunteered to participate in this study.

Research Methodology

Two methods of research were employed to conduct this study. First, data were retrieved from existing records. Second, a survey instrument was designed by the researcher as a tool to assess the effectiveness of the AAP. The document search was conducted to ascertain the AAP creation and historical information; program execution contained within advisor files; and institutional program evaluation materials.

The researcher consulted the staff in Admissions, Financial Aid,

Academic Advisors' offices and AAP participants to gain a better understanding of the history, characteristics, and patterns of students in the AAP along with stories of individual experiences with the program. The information gained from informal inquiries also assisted the researcher in determining the best approach to design the survey instrument. The generalizations made by the staff and student responses to the survey instrument were analyzed for content by researcher identified categories.

The AAP Contract

The AAP contract requires students to meet individually with their academic advisor. In this meeting, the program and its expectations are explained to the student. This also allows the academic advisor the opportunity to assess the student's particular academic and financial situation to determine the level of counseling that will be needed in order to assist the student in meeting the requirements of the AAP while maintaining satisfactory academic progress.

Students in the AAP have three primary responsibilities:

1) Attend every class session. If students miss a class due to extenuating circumstances, they are to contact the instructor of the class to explain their absence.

2) Maintain a "C" average in every class. If the student is making below a "C" average in a class, they are to contact the Student Support Services for free tutoring.

3) Submit to monitoring by instructors. The student is to have each instructor complete a monitoring report every two weeks and return it to the Student Support Services Office. These reports are completed six times

during the semester through the twelfth week. At that time, recommendations are made to the Financial Aid Office as to whether or not the student should receive financial assistance.

Should the student fail to meet these responsibilities, he/she will be denied financial assistance, including Pell Grants or student loans for a period of no less than one semester. No financial aid will be dispersed prior to the posting of final grades. Those students whose advisors recommend in the twelfth week that they receive financial aid will receive their money at the end of the semester, provided they complete the classes with a "C" average. All other students not recommended in the twelfth week of the semester will have to wait until the end of the sixteenth week when grades are posted to determine their eligibility for financial assistance. If the student is not approved and remains ineligible for financial assistance, he/she will be responsible for paying their tuition from their own resources.

Students cannot be eligible for financial aid if they are not in good academic standing. Good academic standing requires students to earn at least eight or more credit hours if they have full-time status. Three-quarter time status requires a student to pass five credit hours. Half-time status requires a student to pass three credit hours of course work in order to have good academic standing.

Each student's situation is individually evaluated based upon their unique circumstances. The intention is to aid students in their attempts to achieve academic success and to introduce to and involve students in the services that the Student Support Services unit has to offer.

Selection of Sample

This study focused on the at-risk student population at JALC. First, a list of names was compiled of the 1124 students who were not eligible for financial aid due to their academic record. A total of 1124 students were ineligible for financial assistance for the 1996-1997 and 1997-1998 school terms. These students were sent a letter (Appendix M) from the Director of Financial Aid informing them of their loss of eligibility of financial assistance due to the absence of academic progress. The letter informs the students that they may enroll in the AAP as an opportunity to reinstate their eligibility to receive financial aid. The average enrollment at JALC during those years was just over 5,000 students. Only 317 students chose to enroll in the AAP. Those students were self-selected participants ineligible for financial aid in the program who elected complete the terms of the contract.

Collection of the Data

Academic performance and financial aid eligibility information needed for this study was obtained through data collection from the files of the Admissions Office, Financial Aid Office and through the administration of a survey instrument. Specifically, the records collected were those of students not eligible for financial aid and those of students who were eligible for financial aid. The data included the GPA of students the semester prior to enrollment in the AAP, the semester enrolled in the AAP, and the semester after enrollment in the AAP, as well as the GPA from the comparable semesters of students ineligible for financial aid but not enrolled in the AAP. Because some AAP students were not enrolled at JALC for three consecutive semesters, their recorded GPA prior to enrollment in the AAP may actually

reflect academic work completed two years or just one semester prior to their enrollment in the AAP. All academic records were accessed through the computer system at JALC. After the data were gathered, they were also analyzed to determine if there was a difference in the GPA of students in the AAP before, during and after their enrollment of the program. Thus, GPA was one of the variables used to determine the effectiveness of the AAP as well as comparing the GPA of the students who were ineligible for financial aid, but not enrolled in the AAP. The GPAs of the AAP participants were compared to the GPAs of those students ineligible for Financial Aid and enrolled for classes.

A letter (Appendix B) seeking permission to conduct this study at JALC was sent to the Vice President of Instruction at JALC. Academic records and personal data were retrieved from the college's computer system and files in the Financial Aid Office. After the Human Subjects Committee approved this study (Appendix A), a letter requesting students to participate in this study (Appendix H) was drafted on JALC letterhead, approved, and signed by the Director of Financial Aid. This letter was sent by mail to all individuals in the AAP for the three semesters: Fall 1996, Spring 1997 and Fall 1997. Mailing labels were obtained from the Director of Admissions.

Students sent notification from the Office of Financial Aid to come in regarding the survey upon arrival received a copy of the cover letter along with the survey instrument. Students who elected to participate were given instruction on how to complete the survey from the Financial Aid staff. Upon completion, students returned the survey to the Financial Aid staff but retained a copy of the cover letter for their personal files. All survey instruments were collected at the end of each work day and placed in a

secured file until they were tabulated by the researcher.

Financial Aid Staff were provided with a verbal script (Appendix K) providing instructions to the students. When finished, students returned their completed questionnaire to one of the Financial Aid staff members. The completed survey instruments were kept in a secured folder until the researcher retrieved them for analysis.

The letter requested students to come to the Financial Aid Office to fill out a survey (Appendix D) based on their experiences with the AAP. This survey would help determine the effectiveness of the program and evaluate its quality. A total of 190 letters were sent (Appendix H) to all students for whom the college had a current mailing address. The first mailing produced only 14 responses. The second mailing (Appendix I) contained 150 letters, asking again students to come to the Financial Aid Office to fill out the survey. The second mailing,produced an 10 additional responses. The reduction of an additional 40 students from the original 317 sample population resulted from withdrawals and undeliverable letters returned from the first mailing.

Finally, a third mailing (Appendix J) consisting of 297 survey instruments (Appendix D) was sent instructing students to complete the surveys at home and return them by mail to the Financial Aid Office. Only 297 survey instruments were sent out of the 317 sample population because the researcher had received 20 completed surveys prior to that mailing. Each letter contained a self-addressed envelope for the return of the completed survey. Enclosed was also a copy of the cover letter personally signed by the researcher. The cover letter indicated the importance of the student's participation and asked the student to mail back the completed survey within

ten days from the mailing date. After the third follow-up mailing, there were a total of 46 participants who completed the survey instrument, for an overall response rate of 14.5%.

When the study was complete, a letter of thanks for participating in the study was sent to each student who completed the survey. A letter was also sent to the staff at JALC thanking them of their help, support, and efforts in facilitating the distribution of the survey for this study (Appendix N).

Process for Analysis of Data

To answer each of the research questions, several methods of analysis were utilized. Academic success was measured through the comparison of student GPAs before, during and after enrolling in the AAP. Retention was determined by examining enrollment status at the end of the semester. Academic progress was measured by the grade point average when enrolled in the AAP and returned the following semester.

To answer research question one, What percentage of the students enrolled in the AAP were approved for financial aid eligibility in Fall 1996, Spring 1997, and Fall 1997?, the number of students returned to good standing was compared to the number of students not returned to good status. The average number of students per semester was then calculated to find the mean.

To answer research question two, What percentage of students in the AAP have been enrolled for longer than the current semester?, the responses were grouped by the choices listed on the surveys. A calculation was performed to determine the mean for each semester enrolled in the program.

For research question three, Has the Grade Point Average changed for

those students enrolled in the AAP versus those students who are not enrolled in the AAP and are not eligible for any financial assistance?, all data were placed in MINITAB, a statistical software program. This provided the opportunity to perform a t-test to determine if there was a statistically significant difference between the ineligible students who were in the AAP who had a higher GPA than the students not in the AAP. The GPA's of these students were averaged by adding all of the GPA's of the AAP participants and the eligible students for financial aid for the respective academic year and then dividing this number by the number of students. Statistically significant p values will be described in terms of $p \leq .005$.

For research question four, Has the retention rate of students in the AAP improved in comparison to the retention rate of students not in the AAP?, the results were gathered through the survey instrument. All data were placed in MINITAB, a statistical software program. This provided the opportunity to perform a t-test to determine if there was a statistically significant difference.

To answer research question five, How do the students in the AAP feel the program could be improved?, the results were gathered through a short answer, fill-in-the-blank question. The purpose of that format was to allow students the opportunity to verbalize their suggestions for improvement of the AAP. The survey results included many suggestions and ideas for improving the Academic Appeal Program at JALC.

For research question six, Did the AAP affect students' grade point, during or after enrollment in the AAP?, the results were gathered through a data collection. All data were placed in MINITAB, a statistical software program. A t-test was performed to determine if there was a statistically

significant difference between the GPA the semester prior to enrollment in the AAP, the semester in the AAP, and the semester after the AAP. The GPA's of these students were averaged by adding up all of the GPA's of the AAP participants in each semester and then dividing by the number of students in each semester. Statistically significant t values will be described in terms of $t \leq 2$ or $t \leq -2$.

To answer research question seven, Did students enrolled in the AAP from Fall 1996, Spring 1997, and Fall 1997 believe the program affected their personal, academic and/or financial objectives?, the responses were grouped by the choices listed on the surveys. The data were calculated to determine the mean. Other questions asked for demographic information, such as age, gender and ethnicity.

The questionnaire response options for items 4-5 were scored, in order from 1 to 5: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 or more. The questionnaire response options for items 6-19 were scored, in order from 1 to 5: Strongly Agree, Agree, Indifferent, Disagree, Strongly Disagree. The questionnaire response option for item 20 was open-ended asking for suggestions to improve the AAP. The responses were scored by documenting all recorded responses from participants on the AAP in Chapter IV. Missing responses were coded as follows. A total of two missing data or responses to items 12-20 were assigned the value of a blank and not calculated into the final results from the survey.

Summary

The purpose of this study was to determine the effectiveness of the AAP in relationship to academic success and student retention. The sample was taken from students in the AAP Fall 1996, Spring 1997, and/or Fall 1997

semesters. A data collection and survey were used to determine the results of this study. Computer records were accessed to collect the enrollment data, GPA, and demographic information.

Chapter IV

Findings

The purpose of this study was to determine the effectiveness of the Academic Appeal Program (AAP) at John A. Logan College (JALC). Increased reliance by academic institutions, state and local governments, and the public on measures of institutional effectiveness has inspired a demand for greater accountability (Wyman, 1996). This chapter includes an overview of the data collected and responses to each of the research questions gathered from the surveys. In addition, this chapter focuses on how the data relates to the original statement of the problem. Surveys were utilized in determining and evaluating the effectiveness of the AAP.

The surveys were distributed by Financial Aid Office staff, after students were sent a letter requesting they come to the JALC Financial Aid Office to complete a survey. The surveys were also collected by the staff at the Financial Aid Office. A last effort to increase the response rate was performed for this study. The survey instrument was mailed to all of the students in the AAP from either Fall 1996, Spring 1997 and/or Fall 1998 semesters along with a return envelope with postage. The AAP participants were asked to complete the survey and mail it back to JALC.

A comparison was made between the students in the AAP and students not in the AAP, but also ineligible for financial aid. This study compared the GPA's of students a semester prior to the enrollment in the AAP, the semester in the AAP, and the semester after enrollment in the AAP. In addition, a comparison of GPA's was made between the AAP students versus enrolled students at JALC ineligible for financial aid, but not

participating in the AAP. The results of this study are presented as follows.

Demographic Data

The sample of this study included 317 AAP participants in the Fall 1996, Spring 1997 and/or Fall 1997 semesters, in addition to ineligible students for financial aid for 1996-1997 and 1997-1998. Only 14.5% (46) of the targeted sample participated in this study by completing the survey instrument. Table 1 consists of data that were taken from students in the AAP. The demographic questions on the survey included: age, gender, and ethnic origin (American Indian, White, Black, Asian/Pacific Islander, Hispanic or Other).

The ages of the students (46) that responded to the survey ranged from 19-58 years. The mean age of this group was 25.63 years. The standard deviation was 7.96 of the respondents (n=46), 24% were male and 76% were female. The ethnic origin of the respondents indicated that 0% were American Indian, 57% White, 39% Black, 0% Asian/Pacific Islander, 2% Hispanic and 2% Other.

The research questions and their results are presented in the rest of this chapter. Three research questions are answered in the survey data and four research questions are answered by the collection of data from existing records.

Research Questions

Research question one: What percentage of the students enrolled in the AAP were approved for financial aid eligibility in Fall 1996, Spring 1997, and Fall 1997?

There were 1124 students at JALC from Fall 1996, Spring 1997, and Fall 1997 who were ineligible for financial aid. Only 28.5% (317) of those students chose to enroll in the AAP. In Fall 1996, a total of 60 students ineligible for financial assistance were enrolled in the AAP. Only 53% (32/60) of those students successfully completed all the AAP contractual requirements. In Spring 1997, a total of 156 students enrolled in the AAP. Thus, 41% (64/156) of the students in the AAP successfully completed all contractual requirements of the program and received financial eligibility for that semester. In Fall 1997, a total of 101 students enrolled in the AAP. Only 57% (58/101) of the students completed all contractual requirements of the AAP. Overall, 48.5% of the AAP participants involving all three semesters successfully fulfilled all the AAP requirements, received their financial aid, and were returned to good academic standing.

Table 1

Percentage of Students Enrolled in the AAP

	Fall 1996	Spring 1997	Fall 1997
Total Students Ineligible for Financial Aid	650	650	462
Students in the AAP	60	156	101
AAP Students Successful	32	64	58
Percentage Successful	53.3%	41%	57.4%
AAP Students Not Successful	28	92	43
Percentage Not Successful	46.6%	59%	42.6%

Research question two: How many semesters does the average ineligible student for financial aid enroll in the AAP?

Based on the sample population of 46, the mean time spent in the AAP was 1.59 semesters. The results are shown in Table 2. Data indicate that 69.6% of the participants in this study had been enrolled in the AAP for only one semester; 13% were in the program for two semesters; 10.9% were enrolled for three semesters; while only 2.2% were enrolled for four semesters. Additionally, 4.3% of the sample population stated they were enrolled in the AAP for at least five semesters.

Table 2

Average Semesters Students in the AAP

Fall 1996, Spring 1997 and Fall 1997

Number of Semesters Enrolled	Percentage	Number of Participants
1	69.6%	32
2	13%	6
3	10.9%	5
4	2.2%	1
5+	4.3%	2

mean= 1.59, SD= 1.066, x=46

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Research question three: Has the Grade Point Average changed for those students enrolled in the AAP versus those students not enrolled in the AAP?

The average GPA of students in the AAP for the Fall 1996 academic term was 2.2, as compared to 2.2 for students ineligible for financial aid not enrolled in the AAP. Thus, there was no significant difference found in the GPA between the students in the AAP versus non-AAP participants. In Spring 1997, the average GPA of students enrolled in the AAP was 2.6. Students not enrolled in the AAP and ineligible for financial assistance earned a mean GPA of 2.2 for Spring 1997. Thus, significance was evident in Fall 1997, when the AAP participants earned an average GPA of 2.9, as compared to those ineligible for financial aid and not in the program who earned a 1.4 GPA. The Fall 1997 cohort was found to have the most statistically significant difference in GPAs.

A t-test was performed to answer this question using the .05 level of significance to determine the difference. As a result, there was a statistically significant difference in GPAs found in the t-test for two of the three semesters. Students enrolled in the AAP for the Spring 1997 and Fall 1997 semesters did substantially better academically than those not enrolled in the program. The information is presented in Table 3.

Table 3

GPA of Students Ineligible For Financial Aid

	Fall 1996	Spring 1997	Fall 1997
GPA Average of Students in the AAP	2.24 / 5.0	2.64 / 5.0	2.94 / 5.0
GPA Average of Students Not in the AAP	2.21 / 5.0	2.24 / 5.0	1.43 / 5.0
	t= -0.12 p= 0.90 df= 101	t= -2.21 p= 0.028 df= 230	t= -9.58 p= 0.000 df= 135

Research question four: Has the retention rate of students in the AAP improved in comparison to the retention rate of students not in the AAP?

Findings regarding the retention rate of AAP participants after they are released from the program are statistically significant. In Fall 1996, 34 of 60 students enrolled in the AAP took classes at JALC the following semester for a retention rate of 56.6%. In Spring 1997, 85 of 156 students enrolled in the AAP returned to JALC the following semester. The retention rate for Spring 1997 was 54%. In Fall 1997, 81 of 101 students enrolled in the AAP returned to JALC in Spring 1998. The retention rate for that semester was 81%.

The 1996-1997 academic term indicated that 38% of the students ineligible for financial assistance enrolled at JALC. In the 1997-1998 academic term, 94.2% of the students ineligible for financial assistance enrolled at JALC. Table 4 shows the results.

Table 4

Retention Rate of Students Ineligible For Financial Aid in the AAP

Fall 1996	56% (34)
Spring 1997	54% (85)
Fall 1997	81% (81)

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Research question five: How do the students in the AAP feel about their experience, in general, and how it might be improved?

This question on the survey was designed as a short answer, open-ended response item. The purpose of this format was to allow students the opportunity to verbalize their suggestions for improvement of the AAP. The data revealed an overall response rate of 14.5% to this question. The survey results included the following suggestions and ideas for improving the AAP. There were a total of 23 responses completed out of 46 surveys returned.

Provided below is a list the students' responses:

- One semester I had 2 A's, 1 B, 2 C's, and 1 D. I was not able to receive help because of the D when my other grades were C and above. Not being able to have my books hurt my grades.
- Have papers signed every week.
- Someone could talk to you, help you out, etc. All I had to do was get signatures and show that I was going to class and doing well. No talk about what school path to take. No real help.
- I believe the AAP is useful to those that need it. It should go by yearly GPA and not how it is now. Some students have families and need that money now and not later.
- They (academic advisors) are helpful, very kind when you have any questions for any different reason.
- Instead of a 3.0 GPA to get off academic appeal, it should be a 2.75 GPA.
- I feel that the AAP Program is very fair. More and more, since should know that their success is in their own hands and head. The AAP gave me the chance to prove that I could successfully learn-given a little more time.
- I believe Ms. Okasili has done a fine job with this program. I also believe

this program is very beneficial to many students; however, the overall success depends on each student's self-motivation!

- I feel that the evaluation should start a little later because of the fact that when it is started 9 times out of 10 grades have not been started enough for the instructor to give a proper evaluation of the student. Yes, the fact of the student being responsible to get evaluations every week is good, but in my case I only saw my advisor maybe 4 times and had a hard time getting the evaluation sheets.
- I think it was a good program, sometimes you have a bad semester. One thing I didn't like was that you would get penalized for not going everyday. I have kids that get sick a lot. It's hard to find someone to watch sick kids.
- I think some teachers should pay more attention to those on the program.
- Some (It should be the) kind of program where you don't have to buy your own books.
- In my case, I was in the AAP due to work at another school 5 years. ago. So I was ready to do the work when I came to JAL and didn't need any help. But the advisor was very nice. I would recommend the AAP to an ineligible student because it is the way to recover Financial Aid.
- My experience with the AAP was positive because I wanted to make it a positive experience. Although, the only real support I had was myself. I would recommend more supportive serious attitudes' from the counselors. JALC doesn't have very good academic counselors. They don't help as much as they could. This is an honest response.
- The meetings should be more personal than just a means of stopping off by the office to hand in teacher signatures.
- My counselor was never there when I turned in my forms. I basically just

left my forms in the mailbox each week.

- They need to change the wording explaining why you are on AAP. They also need to explain that you do not get any of your loans, book vouchers or any assistance until the end of the semester.
- The reason I was put in the AAP wasn't relevant to me being a poor student, and not trying. It was because I decided I didn't want to become L.P.N. and dropped classes at Rend Lake College.
- I had one problem, but I'm not sure if it had to do with the AAP or financial aid. After I completed the program, I was told I was ineligible for financial aid. Expecting to receive money in December, I was told I would not receive any until February. First semester tuition is still not paid and I can't get my grades. If this is due to the AAP, I am unhappy with the program.
- You need more counselors like Mrs. Okasili and Mrs. Hill. There are a few of them that don't try to help motivate you, but are quick to talk out of line, and drop you from the program.
- Everything seems to be working fine.
- I really appreciate the AAP, because I want and need my education even though the first and second time I was on it my grades were not so great. But that was due to inconveniences and homelife not being so great. If I had help with child care I could improve my grades and time there. It shouldn't matter what you're majoring in. The fact is, these people are trying to improve their lives. So we don't depend on the State.
- Appeal advisors should be more helpful in explaining requirements and when Appeal Reports are due. The Financial aid office should also list what type of grants are rewarded.

Research question six: Did the AAP affect students' grade point averages during or after enrollment in the AAP?

To answer this question, a two sample t-test was conducted for all three semesters (Fall 1996, Spring 1997, and Fall 1997). To determine the significance of the findings, the t-value, degrees of freedom, and p-value were calibrated.

The mean GPA of students in the AAP was between a 1.4 and a 1.6. Overall, these GPA's increased and ranged between a 2.2 and 2.9. The semester after being released from the AAP, these same student's GPAs decreased to an average of 2.0 to a 2.4. Table 5 display the results of the data collection.

Table 5

GPA of Students in the AAP

	Fall 1996	Spring 1997	Fall 1997
Students Enrolled in the AAP	60	156	101
GPA of Students Semester in the AAP	2.236/5.0	2.643/5.0	2.94/5.0
GPA of Students Semester After the AAP	2.065/5.0	2.397/5.0	80.2% enrolled for Spring 1998
during/after	t= 0.46 p= 0.65 df= 66	t= 1.17 p= 0.24 df= 164	

Research question seven: Did students enrolled in the AAP during Fall 1996, Spring 1997, and Fall 1997 believe the program affected their personal, academic and/or financial objectives?

The survey was divided into three sections: personal, academic, and financial objectives. Questions 7, 9, 11, 15, 16, 17, and 19 focused on the students' personal objectives in the AAP. Table 6 shows these results. Questions 6, 10, 12, and 18 addressed the academic objectives of students in relationship to the terms of the AAP contract. The information is shown in Table 7. Questions 8, 13, and 14 address the financial objectives of the survey. Table 8 shows these results.

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Table 6

The Effectiveness of the AAP from Student Responses-I

	strongly agree 1	agree 2	indifferent 3	disagree 4	strongly disagree 5	
#7 I take the Academic Appeal Program seriously.						
Participants:	20	19	3	1	3	Total Sample Population= 46
Responded:	43.5%	41.3%	6.5%	2.2%	6.5%	Mean = 1.870
						SD= 1.08
#9 My academic advisor was encouraging and supportive.						
Participants:	18	17	3	3	5	Total Sample Population= 46
Responded:	39.1%	37%	6.5%	6.5%	10.9%	Mean = 2.130
						SD= 1.310
#11 It was helpful to meet with my academic advisor every two weeks.						
Participants:	7	15	13	6	4	Total Sample Population= 46
Responded:	15.2%	32.6%	28.3%	17.4%	6.5%	Mean = 2.674
						SD= 1.136
#15 Signing a contract for the AAP made me take the program more seriously.						
Participants:	11	19	10	3	1	Total Sample Population= 44
Responded:	25%	43.2%	22.7%	6.8%	2.3%	Mean = 2.182
						SD= 0.97

Table 6 (Continued)

The Effectiveness of the AAP from Student Responses-I

	strongly agree 1	agree 2	indifferent 3	disagree 4	strongly disagree 5	
#16 I had a positive experience with the AAP.						
Participants:	12	19	7	3	3	Total Sample Population = 44
Responded:	27.3%	43.2%	15.9%	6.8%	6.8%	Mean = 2.227
						SD= 1.138
#17 I would recommend the AAP to any student who is ineligible for financial aid due to their academic record.						
Participants:	17	24	1	0	2	Total Sample Population = 44
Responded:	38.6%	54.5%	2.3%	0%	4.5%	Mean = 1.773
						SD= 0.886
#19 The Academic Appeal Program could be improved.						
Participants:	9	19	8	3	2	Total Sample Population = 44
Responded:	20.5%	27.3%	34.1%	13.6%	4.5%	Mean = 2.545
						SD= 1.109

Table 7

The Effectiveness of the AAP from Student Responses-II

	strongly agree 1	agree 2	indifferent 3	disagree 4	strongly disagree 5	
#6 Being a member of the Academic Appeal Program (AAP) has helped me to be academically successful at JALC.						
Participants:	13	18	7	4	4	Total Sample Population = 46
Responded:	30.2%	39.1%	15.2%	8.7%	8.7%	Mean = 2.304
						SD= 1.227
#10 The AAP helped me to stay focused on my studies.						
Participants:	15	17	5	5	4	Total Sample Population = 46
Responded:	32.6%	37%	10.9%	10.9%	8.7%	Mean = 2.261
						SD= 1.273
#12 The AAP has helped me to be more self-disciplined in my studies.						
Participants:	15	14	5	6	4	Total Sample Population = 44
Responded:	34.1%	31.8%	11.4%	13.6%	9%	Mean = 2.295
						SD= 1.322
#18 The AAP gave me the incentive to work towards graduation.						
Participants:	12	19	8	3	2	Total Sample Population = 44
Responded:	27.3%	43.2%	15.9%	6.8%	4.5%	Mean = 2.182
						SD= 1.063

Table 8

The Effectiveness of the AAP from Student Responses-III

	strongly agree 1	agree 2	indifferent 3	disagree 4	strongly disagree 5	
#8 I would be a student at JALC even if I were not enrolled in the AAP and was ineligible for Financial Aid.						
Participants:	13	13	7	7	6	Total Sample Population = 46
Responded:	28.3%	28.3%	15.2%	15.2%	13%	Mean = 2.565
						SD= 1.393
#13 The AAP has given me another opportunity allowed me to continue my education at JALC, because of my inability to receive financial aid due to my academic record.						
Participants:	22	16	3	0	3	Total Sample Population = 44
Responded:	50%	36.4%	7%	0%	7%	Mean = 1.773
						SD= 1.075
#14 Having the opportunity to defer payment for my classes until the end of the semester when I am eligible for financial aid, if I succeed academically, motivates me to do well.						
Participants:	17	23	2	1	1	Total Sample Population = 44
Responded:	38.6%	52.3%	4.5%	2.3%	2.3%	Mean = 1.773
						SD= 0.831

Chapter V

Summary, Conclusions, and Recommendations

This chapter contains the summary, conclusions, and recommendations pertinent to this study.

Summary

The problem was to determine the effectiveness of the Academic Appeal Program (AAP) at John A. Logan College (JALC) in improving the retention rate and academic success of students. The design permitted the researcher to obtain students' perceptions of the effectiveness of the AAP, based on their experiences with the program.

This study included 46 survey responses from a sample of 317 students enrolled during the Fall 1996, Spring 1997, and Fall 1997 in the AAP. Student academic data for this study were obtained from the Office of Financial Aid and Office of Admissions. The variables consisted of GPA, enrollment in JALC, and participant/non-participant status within the AAP.

The results indicated that over the course of three semesters (prior to, during and after) enrollment in the AAP, the average student's GPA started very low, increased while in the AAP and declined slightly the semester after enrollment in the AAP. Based on the results, a statistically significant difference occurred between the GPAs of the students the semester prior to enrollment in the AAP and the semester during enrollment in the AAP. The results also show that the mean GPA was significantly higher the semester after the student was released from the program in comparison to the semester before enrollment in the AAP. The overall retention rate for AAP

participants has increased and the results show that 57% of the students in Fall 1996 returned the semester after enrollment in the AAP. In Spring 1997, 46% of the AAP participants returned the next semester. In Fall 1997, the retention rate dramatically increased to 80%. The researcher also discovered that approximately half of the students in the AAP were recommended to have their financial aid eligibility reinstated. It was also found that 69.6% of the participants in this study indicated they had been enrolled in the AAP for only one semester. In Fall 1996, there was no statistically significant difference in the GPA between students in the AAP versus students not enrolled in the AAP. Consequently, there was a statistically significant difference between students not in the AAP versus those in the AAP during the Spring 1997, and Fall 1997 semesters. For Spring 1997, t= -2.21 and for Fall 1997, t= -9.58. The GPA's of students in the AAP for Spring 1997, and Fall 1997 were significantly higher than students ineligible for financial aid and not enrolled in the program. The student's perceptions of the AAP informed the researcher the program was effective, but there are improvements in essay form recommended by the student participants in the study. The students also believe that the AAP effected their personal, academic and/or financial objectives.

1) The overall percentage of students from Fall 1996, Spring 1997, and Fall 1998 enrolled in the AAP that were approved for financial eligibility is 48.58%.

2) Based on the sample population of 46, the average person was enrolled in the AAP for 1.59 semesters.

3) There was a difference in GPA between students in the AAP versus ineligible students for financial aid not enrolled in the AAP.

4) The retention rate of AAP participants and non-AAP participants has improved recently (1997-1998), as compared to 1996-1997.

5) The students in the AAP strongly believe the program is effective.

6) Even though the retention rate of students in the AAP decreased rapidly after they were released from the program (over 40% for Fall 1996 and Spring 1997), there was a significant increase in enrollment (Spring 1998) after students were released from the program in Fall 1997. The retention rate for Fall 1997 AAP participants was 80%. This figure may indicate that the effectiveness of the AAP is increasing.

All AAP participants from Fall 1996, Spring 1997, and Fall 1997 showed statistically significant differences in GPA between the semester prior to enrollment in the AAP as compared to the semester enrolled in the AAP. Only one statistically significant difference existed between the GPA of the AAP participants and that was the semester prior to enrollment in the AAP as compared to the semester after the student was released from the AAP.

Conclusions

Based on the limitations of this study, and the findings reported, the following conclusions were made:

1) Over one-quarter of the students who were ineligible for financial aid chose to enroll in the AAP and nearly half of these successfully fulfilled their AAP contract. Therefore, it can be concluded that the retention rate of at-risk students increases when the students are enrolled in the AAP and successfully complete the terms of the contract.

2) Based on the responses from the survey instrument, the majority of the students enrolled in the AAP were in the program for only one semester.

Therefore, it can be concluded that the average AAP student returns to good standing academically and financially within one semester of enrollment in the program.

3) During the 1996-1997 academic term, over one-third of the students ineligible for financial assistance continued to enroll at JALC. During the 1997-1998 academic term, nearly all students ineligible for financial assistance continued their enrollment at JALC. Due to the success of the students in the AAP, the researcher believes the program was successful for these students because their GPA remained high after release from the AAP as compared to their mean GPA prior to enrollment in the program. These students also know that if their GPA goes down after release from the AAP, they are required to re-enroll in the AAP for the remaining semesters they choose to enroll at JALC.

4) Based on the students' responses, the majority of students believe the AAP could be improved through better assistance from the academic advisors. Students stated they were looking for guidance, direction, support and encouragement from their academic advisor but did not always receive it. Students felt their needs would be better met by more consistency throughout the program regarding policies and procedures of the several financial concerns identified; the most often mentioned was that students desire their financial assistance for books and school supplies before the end of the semester. Therefore, it can be concluded that the AAP has served the needs of its students effectively, but is in need of improvement regarding the policies and consistencies of the program.

5) The responses were based on the survey instrument from students enrolled in the AAP during Fall 1996, Spring 1997, and Fall 1997 semesters.

The majority of the responses indicated students agreed or strongly agreed that the program positively affected their personal and academic success or financial objectives. Therefore, it can be concluded that the AAP was effective in assisting students to reinstate their financial eligibility and increase their level of academic success.

6) This study proved to have significant findings. Therefore, it would be beneficial for another researcher to conduct a study on the AAP, creating a standardized manual of how to implement this program at a similar institution(s) to provide this retention effort. This manual should provide an introduction to the program, objectives, procedures, and recommendations.

7) To help increase the response rate of participants completing the survey instrument, the researcher created a direct mail piece. This permitted mailing the survey to the sample population and included a return envelope with paid postage. This nearly doubled the response rate of completed survey instruments. This provided the researcher with stronger results because the sample population was larger, which made the results more reliable.

Recommendations

Recommendations from this study include suggestions for staff and ideas for further research. These recommendations are:

1) The AAP is in need of more consistency regarding its policies and procedures of monitoring student progress. Currently, advisors use their individual discretion in meeting with each student. As a result, some advisors are perceived to be more effective than other advisors, while the actions of others require more effort from students. Since

students are aware of this, it creates a biased atmosphere.

2) It is recommended that a future researcher further assess the effectiveness of the AAP; program administrators should provide all available data since the establishment of the AAP in Fall 1993.

3) It is recommended that a future researcher conduct a qualitative study of the AAP which would enable college administrators to better understand students' needs and gain a more comprehensive picture of the AAP from personal interviews. This type of study would allow students and staff to express their opinions without fitting their responses into a Likert type scale.

4) It is recommended that the College create an Academic Appeal Program Review Committee to meet once a month to discuss, revise and evaluate the criteria and effectiveness of the program. This committee would also be responsible for organizing campus-wide efforts to convey the importance of this program and promote a support system between the faculty and staff.

5) It is recommended that a program administrator follow-up with the students the semester after they are in the AAP to determine the reasons why the average GPA decreases after the student is released from the program.

6) It is recommended that a future researcher conduct a study at similar institutions to determine the effectiveness of this student assistance program at another community college.

7) It is recommended that a future researcher conduct a study on special populations (ethnic groups, age, gender, traditional versus non-traditional students, etc.) to determine if their needs or objectives differ

from those of other participants in the AAP.

8) The final recommendation is the need for further research on the AAP by analyzing the criteria and characteristics of the program. Studying the magnitude and potential of the AAP would not be just beneficial to JALC, but also other higher education institutions considering the implementation of similar programs.

Closing Remark

Through this study, the researcher discovered many statistically significant differences in the data gathered for this study. There is much information presented in this paper to improve the effectiveness of the AAP at JALC and benefit at-risk students. There is much to be learned from this study that can be applied to other institutions. The researcher feels that there are many areas that warrant documentation and research in this area to create a stronger awareness and to better the quality of services that higher education can provide to meet the needs of its students. The AAP in its early development has helped many students achieve their academic, personal and professional objectives while at the same time affecting the increase in enrollment at JALC. In the future, it is important for researchers to continue studying the effectiveness of the AAP and the impact it has on student retention and academic success.

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APPENDIX A
HUMAN SUBJECTS APPROVAL

SIUC HSC FORM A

REQUEST FOR APPROVAL OF RESEARCH ACTIVITIES INVOLVING HUMAN SUBJECTS

This approval is valid for one (1) year from the approval date. Researchers must request a renewal to continue the research after that date. This approval form must be included in all Master's theses/research papers and Doctoral dissertations involving human subjects to be submitted to the Graduate School.

PROJECT TITLE: THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE ACADEMIC APPEAL PROGRAM AT JOHN A. LOGAN COLLEGE.

CERTIFICATION STATEMENT:

In making this application, I(we) certify that I(we) have read and understand the University's policies and procedures governing research activities involving human subjects, and that I(we) shall comply with the letter and spirit of those policies. I(we) further acknowledge my(our) obligation to (1) accept responsibility for the research described, including work by students under my(our) direction, (2) obtain written approval from the Human Subjects Committee of any changes from the originally approved protocol **BEFORE** making those changes, (3) retain signed informed consent forms, in a secure location separate from the data, for at least **three** years after the completion of the research, and (4) report immediately all adverse effects of the study on the subjects to the Chairperson of the Human Subjects Committee, Carbondale, Illinois, (618) 453-4543, and to the Director of the Office of Research Development and Administration, Southern Illinois University at Carbondale, (618) 453-4531.

Kathleen P. Gallagher

KATHLEEN A. GALLAGHER — 10/16/97

RESEARCHER(S) or PROJECT DIRECTORS — DATE

Please print or type out name below signature

DR. JAMES M. WALLACE — 10/27/97

RESEARCHER'S ADVISOR (required for all student projects) — DATE

Please print or type out name below signature

The request submitted by the above researcher(s) was approved by the SIUC Human Subjects Committee.

Robert C. Roothe — 11/14/97

CHAIRPERSON, SOUTHERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY HUMAN SUBJECTS COMMITTEE — DATE

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APPENDIX B

REQUEST FOR STUDY AT JALC

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Kathleen A. Gallagher
130 Smith Hall • Carbondale, IL 62901 • (618) 536-8484 • klag@siu.edu

63

September 17, 1997

Dr. Robert Mees
Vice President of Instruction
John A. Logan College
Carterville, IL 62918

Dear Dr. Mees:

I am working on my Masters of Science in Education degree in College Student Personnel at Southern Illinois University at Carbondale and recently completed an internship in the Admissions and Records Department at John A. Logan College (Spring 1997). I discovered the Academic Appeals Program at JALC while working with the academic advisors. I became very interested in this program and would like to conduct a study of its impact on student retention for my thesis.

I am requesting permission to use information from student records and to conduct a student survey. My thesis will include data collection and interaction with the students enrolled in the Academic Appeals Program. Specifically, I want to measure the effectiveness of the Academic Appeals Program on student retention, GPA and student loan default rate. Dr. Larry Chapman suggested that I seek campus approval for this data collection and student survey. Attached is a copy of the survey instrument I plan to utilize while conducting my research. I would appreciate permission to use existing student records to gather data and conduct a quantitative survey. A letter noting your permission would be submitted to the Human Subjects Committee at SIUC for final approval.

If you have any questions or concerns, I can be contacted at the number listed above. Thank you for your consideration of my request.

Most sincerely,

Kathleen A. Gallagher

Kathleen A. Gallagher

Approved: Robert L. Mees 10/1/97
Robert L. Mees, Vice President
for Instructional Services

Enclosure

9-18-97

APPENDIX C
COVER LETTER

November 10, 1997

Dear Sir or Madam:

My name is Kathleen A. Gallagher and I am a graduate student in Higher Education at Southern Illinois University at Carbondale (SIUC). I am writing this letter to request your participation in a study evaluating the Academic Appeals Program (AAP) at John A. Logan College.

This study is a final research project for my masters degree program and I am asking that you assist in the research process through your participation in the completion of a questionnaire. Completion of the survey should take approximately 10 minutes of your time. This questionnaire will inquire about issues relating to your experiences with the AAP.

Participation in this research is strictly voluntary, and you are free to withdraw at any time. All responses to the questionnaire will be held in the strictest confidence. I will be the only person reviewing the information provided and such information will only be used for the purposes of this study.

If you have any questions regarding this research project, you may contact me at(H) 618-536-8484, (W) 618-453-2471 or Dr. James Wallace (Research Committee Chairman), Department of Educational Administration and Higher Education, Southern Illinois University at Carbondale, Carbondale, IL 62901-4425, (618) 536-4434.

This project has been approved by the SIUC Human Subjects Committee. Questions concerning your rights as a participant in the research effort may be addressed to the Committee Chairperson, Office of Research Development and Administration, Southern Illinois University at Carbondale, Carbondale, IL 62901-4709, (618) 453-4533.

I ask that you please return the completed survey to the Financial Aid Office, but keep this letter for your personal records. I would like to thank you in advance for your time and participation in this vital research project.

Most sincerely,

Kathleen A. Gallagher
Graduate Student, Department of Educational Administration & Higher Education
Southern Illinois University at Carbondale

APPENDIX D

DATA

Academic Appeal Program Assessment for Student Support Services at John A. Logan College

Fall, 1997

ID#_____

For questions 1-3, please check the correct box. For questions 4-19, circle the number to your response. Complete ONLY ONE response for each question.

1. What is your age? _____

2. Are you? ❒ Male ❒ Female

3. What is your ethnic origin?
   - ❒ American Indian
   - ❒ Asian/Pacific Islander
   - ❒ White (non-Hispanic)
   - ❒ Black (non-Hispanic)
   - ❒ Hispanic
   - ❒ Other

4. Including this semester, I have been enrolled as a student at John A. Logan College for the following semesters.

   1 2 3 4 5 or more

5. I have been enrolled in the AAP for the following number of semester(s).

   1 2 3 4 5 or more

6. Being a member of the Academic Appeal Program (AAP) has helped me to be academically successful at JALC.

strongly agree	agree	indifferent	disagree	strongly disagree
1	2	3	4	5

7. I take the Academic Appeal Program seriously.

strongly agree	agree	indifferent	disagree	strongly disagree
1	2	3	4	5

8. I would be a student at JALC even if I were not enrolled in the AAP and was ineligible for Financial Aid.

strongly agree	agree	indifferent	disagree	strongly disagree
1	2	3	4	5

9. My academic advisor was encouraging and supportive.

strongly agree	agree	indifferent	disagree	strongly disagree
1	2	3	4	5

10. The AAP helped me to stay focused on my studies.

strongly agree	agree	indifferent	disagree	strongly disagree
1	2	3	4	5

11. It was helpful to meet with my academic advisor every two weeks.

strongly agree	agree	indifferent	disagree	strongly disagree
1	2	3	4	5

12. The AAP has helped me to be more self-disciplined in my studies.

strongly agree	agree	indifferent	disagree	strongly disagree
1	2	3	4	5

13. The AAP has given me another opportunity allowed me to continue my education at JALC, because of my inability to receive financial aid due to my academic record.

strongly agree	agree	indifferent	disagree	strongly disagree
1	2	3	4	5

14. Having the opportunity to defer payment for my classes until the end of the semester when I am eligible for financial aid, if I succeed academically, motivates me to do well.

strongly agree	agree	indifferent	disagree	strongly disagree
1	2	3	4	5

15. Signing a contract for the AAP made me take the program more seriously.

strongly agree	agree	indifferent	disagree	strongly disagree
1	2	3	4	5

16. I had a positive experience with the AAP.

strongly agree	agree	indifferent	disagree	strongly disagree
1	2	3	4	5

17. I would recommend the AAP to any student who is ineligible for financial aid due to their academic record.

strongly agree	agree	indifferent	disagree	strongly disagree
1	2	3	4	5

18. The AAP gave me the incentive to work towards graduation.

strongly agree	agree	indifferent	disagree	strongly disagree
1	2	3	4	5

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19. The Academic Appeal Program could be improved.

strongly agree	agree	indifferent	disagree	strongly disagree
1	2	3	4	5

Your Suggestions:

20. What ideas do you have to improve the Academic Appeal Program at JALC?

_____

_____

_____

_____

THIS SURVEY IS CONFIDENTIAL AND DOES NOT INCLUDE YOUR NAME. PLEASE RETURN THE COMPLETED SURVEY INTO THE FINANCIAL AID OFFICE, IN ROOM 203 BUILDING C WHEN COMPLETED. IF YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS, PLEASE SEE STACY HOLLOWAY, DIRECTOR OF FINANCIAL AID OFFICE.

THANK YOU AGAIN FOR YOUR TIME AND SUGGESTIONS!

APPENDIX E

THE AAP STUDENT CONTRACT

The Academic Appeal Program

Student Contract

_____ Regularly attend class. If, for extenuating circumstances, I have to miss I will contact my instructor.

_____ Have my instructors complete the student monitoring reports and return them to the Student Support Services office. Attendance must be "excellent" or "good" to be considered acceptable.

_____ Maintain a "C" average in all my classes.

_____ Obtain tutoring if:
___ I am making below a "C" in any class.
___ I am repeating a class that I previously failed.
___ The instructor recommends it.

_____ Attend at least one study skills workshop during the semester. If none of the times in which the workshops are offered accomodate my schedule, I will meet individually with Mrs. Cima.

_____ Obtain counseling through JALC if I am experiencing any personal or academic difficulties.

I agree to voluntarily participate in the AAP and understand that as part of the Academic Appeal Program, I must complete the above recommendations. If I do not meet these recommendations as explained to me, I understand that I **will not** be eligible to receive any financial assistance for the _____ semester. I may choose not to participate in this program, in which case I will have to complete 12 semester hours with a 3.0 grade point average before any financial assistance will be awarded.

I further understand that failure to complete this program will result in my continued ineligibility for financial aid. thus, making me responsible for all tuition and fees. It was explained to me that the College will defer my tuition as long as I am enrolled in the Academic Appeal Program; however, I understand that I **am responsible** for the purchase of all my textbooks and supplies. I also understand that if I complete the AAP, have my financial aid reinstated and still fail to make academic progress at the end of the semester I will not receive any future financial assistance for a period no less than one semester.

_____ date_____
Student Signature
SS#_____

_____ date_____
Counselor Signature

cc: Financial Aid Office
Admissions

APPENDIX F

STUDENT MONITORING REPORT

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STUDENT MONITORING REPORT

The Financial Aid/Student Support Services Office is attempting to improve the methods of monitoring the progress of our students who are currently in the process of appealing their financial aid status. We will be monitoring two areas: class attendance and academic progress.

We would appreciate your assistance by providing us with information on the following student:

Student name:_____ Social Security No.:_____
Course:_____
Section:_____

Class Attendance

please note: the evaluation of attendance should be on a cumulative basis throughout the semester.

_____Excellent _____Good
_____Average _____Poor

Is class attendance a factor in your grading policy? _____yes _____no

Does the student need to improve his/her class attendance? _____yes _____no

ACADEMIC PROGRESS: STUDENT EVALUATION

What is the student's current grade status?
____A ____B ____C ____D ____E ___ not available at this time

Do you recommend that he/she obtain tutoring? ____yes ____no

Comments: _____
_____
_____
_____

_____ _____
Instructor's Signature Date

To Instructors:
Please return this completed form to the Student Support Services Office, Room C205, either in person or through campus mail, as soon as possible. Thank You for your continued support and assistance. If you have further questions or comments regarding this student's academic progress, please contact Ngozi Okasili at extension 459.

APPENDIX G

AAP LETTER OF APPEAL FORM

Academic Appeal Program

LETTER OF APPEAL FORM

_____Semester, 19___ Date_____

Student _____ Social Security #

1. Student's statement regarding reasons for obtaining ineligible financial aid status._____ _____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

2. Student's plan to regain satisfactory academic progress.

____ To regularly attend class.

____ To obtain tutoring during the _____semester in the following
(semester/year)
course(s)_____ _____
(Please specify courses)

____ To repeat courses related to my major in which I earned less than passing grades.
_____
(Specify courses to be repeated and the semester in which they are to be completed)

____ To meet with a counselor and discuss the possibility of choosing more realistic career/educational goals.

____ To achieve the grade point average required for satisfactory academic progress standing for courses taken during _____ semesters.

____ To attend appropriate study/college survival skills workshops.

____ Other _____
_____

I understand that these recommendations have been designed to allow me to regain satisfactory academic progress. I further understand that failure to meet these recommendations may lead to my continued status as ineligible for any type of financial assistance.

Student signature _____ **Date** _____

Signed: _____
Counselor

APPENDIX H

FIRST LETTER TO AAP PARTICIPANTS

December 5, 1997

Dear Spring 1997 Academic Appeal Participant:

There is some information regarding new updates of the Academic Appeal Program. A study is being conducted to determine the effectiveness of the Academic Appeal Program. Because you have been ineligible for Financial Aid in the past, we would like to inform you of a new opportunity. This opportunity allows you to participate in this study by filling out a survey to express your experiences and interests with the Academic Appeal Program.

This study will compare your grade point average with other students in the Academic Appeal Program to determine the program's effectiveness.

Please bring this letter with you to the Financial Aid Office, Room 203 C, no later than Wednesday, December 17 at 4pm. Any of the Financial Aid staff can assist you. If you have any questions regarding this request, you may contact me at 549-7335, ex. 257. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Stacy Holloway
Director, Financial Aid
John A. Logan College

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APPENDIX I

SECOND LETTER TO AAP PARTICIPANTS

January 13, 1998

Dear Spring 1997 Academic Appeal Participant:

There is some information regarding new updates of the Academic Appeal Program. A study is being conducted to determine the effectiveness of the Academic Appeal Program. Because you have been ineligible for Financial Aid in the past, we would like to inform you of a new opportunity. This opportunity allows you to participate in this study by filling out a survey to express your experiences and interests with the Academic Appeal Program.

This study will compare your grade point average with other students in the Academic Appeal Program to determine the program's effectiveness.

Please bring this letter with you to the Financial Aid Office, Room 203 C, no later than Friday, January 23 at 4pm. Any of the Financial Aid staff can assist you. If you have any questions regarding this request, you may contact me at 549-7335,
ex. 257. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Stacy Holloway
Director, Financial Aid
John A. Logan College

APPENDIX J

FINAL LETTER TO AAP PARTICIPANTS

January 26, 1998

Dear Academic Appeal Participant:

My name is Kathleen A. Gallagher and I am a graduate student in Higher Education at Southern Illinois University at Carbondale (SIUC). I am writing this letter to request your participation in a study evaluating the effectiveness of the Academic Appeal Program (AAP) at John A. Logan College.

This study is a final research project for my masters degree program and I am asking that you assist in the research process through your participation in the completion of a questionnaire. Completion of the survey should take approximately 10 minutes of your time. This questionnaire will inquire about issues relating to your experiences with the AAP.

Participation in this research is strictly voluntary, and you are free to withdraw at any time. All responses to the questionnaire will be held in the strictest confidence. I will be the only person reviewing the information provided and such information will only be used for the purposes of this study. This study will compare your grade point average with other students in the Academic Appeal Program to determine the program's effectiveness.

If you have any questions regarding this research project, you may contact me at (H) 618-536-8484, (W) 618-453-2471 or Dr. James Wallace (Research Committee Chairman), Department of Educational Administration and Higher Education, Southern Illinois University at Carbondale, Carbondale, IL 62901-4425, (618) 536-4434.

This project has been approved by the SIUC Human Subjects Committee. Questions concerning your rights as a participant in the research effort may be addressed to the Committee Chairperson, Office of Research Development and Administration, Southern Illinois University at Carbondale, Carbondale, IL 62901-4709, (618) 453-4533.

I ask that you please mail the completed survey to the Financial Aid Office at JALC **no later than Tuesday, February 3, 1998**. Please keep this letter for your personal records. I would like to thank you in advance for your time and participation in this vital research project.

Most sincerely,

Kathleen A. Gallagher
Graduate Student
Department of Educational Administration & Higher Education
Southern Illinois University at Carbondale

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APPENDIX K

VERBAL SCRIPT FOR FINANCIAL AID STAFF

Verbal Script for Financial Aid Staff

Instructions for students who come to the Financial Aid Office to complete the survey instrument:

Thank you for responding to the letter you were sent. Please read the cover letter to this survey. If you decide to participate, we would like you to complete the survey after carefully reading the cover letter. If you have any questions, ask any of the Financial Aid Staff. When you are finished completing the survey, return it to the Financial Aid Office Staff. Thank you for your participation!

APPENDIX M

LETTER TO STUDENTS INELIGIBLE FOR FINANCIAL AID

JOHN A. LOGAN COLLEGE
Carterville, Illinois 62918

Due to an absence of academic progress at John A. Logan College, you are ineligible to receive student financial assistance. The loss of eligibility for student financial assistance **does not** affect your enrollment status. You are responsible for your tuition and fees. You may regain your eligibility by participating in the academic appeal program. If you have any questions regarding your loss of eligibility, or the academic appeal program, please feel free to contact me at the Financial Assistance Office.

Cordially,

Stacy R. Holloway

Mrs. Stacy R. Holloway
Director for Student Financial Assistance

SRH/cmm

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DIRECT EXTENSION ACCESS (618) 985-2828 or 457-7976
OPERATOR (618) 985-3741 549-7305 542-8612 977-3438 TTY 985-2752

APPENDIX N

THANK YOU LETTER TO FINANCIAL AID STAFF

Kathleen A. Gallagher

Southern Illinois University • 130 Smith Hall • Carbondale, IL 62901 • (618) 536-8484

February 11, 1998

Dear Financial Aid Staff:

I would like to take this opportunity to extend my gratitude for you support and participation in helping distribute and collect my survey instrument to the Academic Appeal Participants for my study on **The Effectiveness of Academic Appeal Program at John A. Logan College**. Your efforts in facilitating this process are much appreciated!

If there is anything I can do to assist you in the future regarding the Academic Appeal Program, please contact me anytime. Thanks again for your help in making this endeavor successful!

Most sincerely,

Kathleen A. Gallagher

VITA

Graduate School
Southern Illinois University

Kathleen A. Gallagher — Date of Birth: April 9, 1974

Local Address: 130 Smith Hall
Thompson Point
Carbondale, Illinois 62901

Home Address: 1054 Cedar Crest Drive
Crystal Lake, Illinois 60014

Degrees Earned: Southern Illinois University at Carbondale
Bachelor of Arts, Design, May 1996

Southern Illinois University at Carbondale
Master of Science in Education,
College Student Personnel, May 1998

Thesis Title: The Effects of the Academic Appeal Program at John A. Logan College

Publications: Colwell, W. B. & Gallagher, K. A. (1998, in press). From Sparks to Flames: The Legal Aspects of Fire Safety in the Residence Halls. Journal of College and University Student Housing, * (*), PP.

Committee Members:

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Dean for Student Services
John A. Logan College
Carterville, IL 62918

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